

STATE CAPITOL COMMITTEE

JULY 20, 2015

PRICHARD BUILDING HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Purpose: Information

SUMMARY OVERVIEW

On May 20, 2015, the Governor's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation voted unanimously to add the Pritchard Building (historic name: "Washington State Library") to the Washington State Heritage Register of Historic Places, and to recommend it for listing on the National Register.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The nomination developed for review by the Governor's Advisory Council documents the history and significance of the Pritchard Building, and it concludes that the building is among the region's most important mid-century works of public architecture.

The Washington State Library was the last monumental building to be added to the West Capitol Campus. The graceful structure that creates the southern margin of the architectural group is an inseparable part of the architectural composition and a fitting last phrase in the 40 year process of building the state's Capitol Campus.

Though designed and constructed just thirty years after the Legislative Building, the State Library introduced highly modern design principles along with innovative materials and structural engineering systems. In many ways the buildings are counterpoints to one another, reflecting a symbolic appreciation of the past and a sense of promise about the future.

The social history surrounding the building and the prominence of designer Paul Thiry during the period of design and construction anchor the building and its history firmly in Pacific Northwest post-war development. By adding the layers of significance through associations to political and artistic figures, the building becomes a textbook on how Washingtonians looked at the future in the 1950s and how public buildings reflected that vision.

The building presents a strong assertion of Modernist architectural character engaging Pacific Northwest centric themes of integrating Japanese architectural influences and utilizing expansive window openings to connecting indoor and outdoor spaces. The elegant simplicity of the building's reduction of classical forms from the Wilder and White group and its siting to complete the south end of the Capitol group provide an unparalleled design solution. In addition, Paul Thiry integrated the works of several prominent Pacific Northwest artists and a noted landscape designer into the exterior, interior, and landscape design for the building to provide a complete architectural composition and cooperation amongst allied arts. Although such a complete architectural and art composition was intended by Wilder and White with the other Capitol group buildings, it was never achieved, making the Washington State Library all the more remarkable for this accomplishment.

With listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, the Pritchard Building joins a formidable group of designated State-owned historic properties, including the State Capitol Historic District which encompasses all of the Wilder and White monumental buildings, the historic state capitol grounds, and the Governor's Mansion; the Old Capitol Building, the Old Thurston County Courthouse, the Dolliver Building, and the General Administration Building, which was nominated by a private citizen in 2007.

NEXT STEPS

The nomination for National Register Listing is under consideration by the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Formal listing is expected in September 2015.

National Register listing does not impose any limitations on an owner's use of the property, except where Federal funding is involved. Listing on the State Register similarly carries no limitations on use of the property.